

# The Legacy of a Flight Instructor

## Student Yesterday, Instructor Today\*

LT COL HÉCTOR DANIEL RÍOS MARTÍNEZ,  
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**Figure. Lt Col Ríos flying A-37, Independence Day, 2021**

*Source: Author*

“The truth is that it is beautiful to share the excitement of a student in their first flight, in their first solo flight, in their first journey beyond their city... Teaching is unique, as it allows you to eternally re-live your first time through the still ductile eyes full of excitement of those who are to experience the still unknown for the

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first time,” says Carlos Bousoño about the accounts of flight instructor Jesus Exupery from Spain.<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to note that when mentioning the term “Flight Instructor,” what we automatically think about are the students, their dreams, their aspirations, their challenges, their problems, and their successes. We think about their childhood dreams of becoming a pilot and testing their performance and skills in order to achieve the great accomplishment of their lifetime: becoming a Pilot.

From another perspective, being a father or mother is a high honor given to only some humans, who take on the daily challenge of being an example, of guiding, teaching, and being a point of reference for what society expects from our children. When we are certified as a flight instructor, we incur that same sense of responsibility, knowing that as an instructor we must accurately impart our knowledge, within a few scant hours, for the student to then be able to adequately fly their aircraft: The student becomes our child.

In addition to being an example worthy of emulating, the flight instructor is seen by their students as the best pilot that exists in the whole world. Their professionalism shall be immediately noted and it shall be contagious, therefore the flight instructor must be judicious when imparting their knowledge, since even personal problems, insecurities, or a lack of preparedness shall be perceived immediately by their students.

During flight training, close bonds of brotherhood and companionship are established through the simple sharing of the same cabin, the same challenges, and the same risks. This is when the student deposits their entire trust in their instructor upon knowing that, in addition to imparting their knowledge, the instructor is able to resolve any problem that might arise in the cabin.

The legacy that the flight instructor shall leave is comparable to a generational relay race, where the flight instructor begins the race and is responsible for passing on the baton of knowledge intact, with which this student can then become, in the near future, an instructor themselves, and so on. Becoming a flight instructor, beyond just a pilot certification, is a challenge to command—to guarantee the doctrine, experience and knowledge that will be treasured by future generations.

There may not be any other instructional situation in which so much is being risked when the instructor sends their student on their first “SOLO” flight. Therefore, the flight instructor must be sure that the student is ready.

Although the student must have completed the training program satisfactorily, have landed safely, and demonstrated knowledge and execution of emergency procedures, there are no standards, signs, or exact facts that tells the instructor that the student is ready for the “SOLO” flight. In other words, it is just something that the “Flight Instructor Simply Knows.”

When the flight instructor says: “Fly Solo,” multiple emotions and memories come together that makes the honor of teaching worthwhile.

This great honor is amplified when we see our students become new flight instructors, who shall in turn continue passing on the “Student Yesterday; Instructor Today” legacy. □

### Notes

1. Carlos Bousoño, “1995 Prince of Asturias Award for Literature,” *Princess of Asturias Foundation*, <https://www.fpa.es/en/princess-of-asturias-awards/laureates/1995-carlos-bousoño.html?especifica=0>.



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